

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USNATO 07872 251721Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM USMISSION USNATO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3477
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 07872

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECDEF AND USNMR SHAPE

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, BE
SUBJECT: SECRETARY VANCE'S LETTER TO FOREIGN MINISTER
SIMONET

REF: STATE 215736 DTG 242037Z AUG 78

1. WE AGREE THAT THE US SHOULD CONTINUE TO PRESS THE
GOVERNMENT OF BELGIUM ON THE RANGE OF UNRESOLVED DEFENSE
ISSUES COVERED IN THE SECRETARY'S LETTER (REFTEL) AND
BELIEVE THAT THIS LETTER WOULD PROVIDE A NEEDED HIGH-
LEVEL PUSH.

2. WHILE WE BELIEVE THE LETTER GENERALLY HITS THE RIGHT
TONE, WE WOULD SUGGEST SOME REVISIONS TO THE LANGUAGE ON
INCREASED DEFENSE SPENDING AND ON COLLOCATION OF WARTIME
HEADQUARTERS. WE HAVE RAISED OUR CONCERNS WITH EMBASSY
BRUSSELS, AND THE EMBASSY IS DELAYING TRANSMISSION OF
THE SECRETARY'S LETTER PENDING WASHINGTON RESPONSE TO
OUR SUGGESTIONS.

3. DEFENSE SPENDING. THE SPECIFIC CHANGES WE WOULD RECOM-
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MEND TO THE THIRD TICK INCLUDE DELETING REFERENCE TO "AD-
VERSE REVERBERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE ALLIANCE" FROM FAILURE
TO MEET THE THREE PERCENT GOAL AND TO CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW
OF ALLIED DEFENSE SPENDING DATA.

4. GIVEN LAST YEAR'S DEFENSE UNDERSPENDING AND FACT THAT
WE DO NOT YET HAVE FINAL DATA FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR,

PLUS PRESS REPORTS (AUGUST 15 DEFENSE/SPACE DAILY) OF SIGNIFICANT BUDGET SHORTFALLS IN 1980-83 PROGRAMS, WE BELIEVE US SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE OVERLY RIGID IN ITS PRESENTATION TO BELGIUM ON NEED TO MEET THE 3 PERCENT AIM OR IN STRESSING THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT STRICTLY ACHIEVING GOAL. AS TO THE CONGRESSIONAL REQUEST FOR ALLIED DEFENSE SPENDING DATA, WE ANTICIPATE THAT ALLIES MIGHT RESENT BEING "THREATENED" WITH CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OVER THEIR FINANCIAL PLANS.

5. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, WE, WITH EMBASSY BRUSSELS' CONCURRENCE, OFFER FOR WASHINGTON'S CONSIDERATION THE FOLLOWING SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE FOR THE THIRD TICK IN THE SECRETARY'S LETTER:

. -- LONG-TERM DEFENSE PROGRAM AND INCREASED DEFENSE SPENDING: DESPITE ITS RECENT PAST POLICY TO INCREASE DEFENSE SPENDING BY 4 PERCENT ANNUALLY IN REAL TERMS, BELGIUM'S CURRENT POSITION ON INCREASING DEFENSE SPENDING BY 3 PERCENT IN REAL TERMS IS STILL UNCLEAR. THIS IS IN CONTRAST TO THE POSITIONS OF MOST OTHER ALLIES. US DEFENSE BUDGETS ARE BEING DESIGNED TO MEET THIS POLICY COMMITMENT, AND WE NATURALLY ARE VERY INTERESTED IN THE EFFORTS OF OUR ALLIES. I HOPE THAT WE WILL HAVE MUTUAL SUPPORT IN MOVING INCREASED DEFENSE BUDGETS THROUGH OUT LEGISLATURES.
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6. COLLOCATION OF EUCOM HEADQUARTERS. THE LAST SENTENCE OF THIS PARAGRAPH MAKES A LINKAGE BETWEEN THE AGREED, MULTI-LATERAL PROJECT (PROJECT 85) AND AN ESSENTIALLY US-BELGIAN BILATERAL ISSUE (COLLOCATION OF EUCOM HEADQUARTERS), SUGGESTING THAT BELGIAN INDECISION ON COLLOCATION WOULD DELAY PROGRESS ON PROJECT 85. SUCH A DELAY WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO OUR ALLIES, AND HENCE BELGIAN INDECISION ON COLLOCATION WOULD ONLY INCREASE THE US COSTS. WASHINGTON MAY WISH TO CONSIDER MODIFYING THIS SENTENCE AS FOLLOWS: "IF A DECISION ON WARTIME COLLOCATION IS DEFERRED AND A POSITIVE DECISION NOT MADE UNTIL AFTER OCT OR NOV, THE EFFECT COULD BE TO INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY THE COSTS OF CONSTRUCTION FOR THE EUCOM ADDITION TO THE SHAPE FACILITY." EMBASSY BRUSSELS CONCURS WITH THIS PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE WORDING.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON GUIDANCE. BENNETT

NOTE BY OC/T: USNATO 07872 NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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